

**[Frank DeSoto]**

[BELIEFS MID CUSTOMS - OCCUPATIONAL LORE?]

Accession no.

W969

Date received

10/10/40

Consignment no.

1

Shipped from

Wash. Off.

Label

Amount

18p. (incl form)

WPA L.C. PROJECT Writer's UNIT

Form[md;]3

Folklore Collection (or Type) [Industrial Folklore]

Title [Begin]: The Whistle of a freight wafted from afar...

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Place of origin Chicago, Ill Date 5/11/39

Project worker Jack Conroy

Project editor

Remarks On form: Industrial folklore

W969

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

FORM C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Jack Conroy

ADDRESS 3569 Cottage Grove Ave.

DATE May 11, 1939

SUBJECT Industrial Folk Lore

NAME OF INFORMANT Frank DeSoto

DeSoto is a Spanish-Irish "boomer" sign painter who says he is a direct lineal descendant of his explorer namesake. His story is unedited, even as to punctuation. This story is an experiment with the method used by Jack Commons in editing his Seven Shifts (E. P. Dutton & Co., 1938). Commons found it more satisfactory to ask his informants to write

## Library of Congress

their stories in their own words. After considerable editing he evolved what he believes to be typical stories of seven typical workers in seven industries.

### 2

The indelence of these two men was notorious. Either could sleep at a moment's notice. They had been known to sleep three times on a three "stretch" wall. At the end of each "swing" they would use 'Dippy's own words "Take a rest" and be down on the "stage" and go to sleep. Subconscious had been known to go to the "tap" to "tie off" and go to sleep on the roof, leaving Dippy down below holding the "pull ropes" unable to do anything about it until Sub chose to wake up. It was commen to see Dip asleep in the warm sun perched precariously an a box behind some stores' plate glass window. Mouth open completely relaxed. Doubtless many a nervous person, passing has wished for that ability of complete relaxation.

This ability to relax had saved Dippy from serious injuries from falls. He had fallen quits a number of times, with slight injuries, for it is said that to relax or to keep one's joints loose while falling saves injuries. Go tense and break a leg. Dippy bad fallen [16?] feet on to a concrete sidewalk, got up went back on the stage and finished the job. He had fallen from a 40-foot stack, thrust one leg through a roof and was up and around the next day. One time one of the hooks parted the loose bricks of a fire wall and let the stage drop a feet. Dippy didn't even lose his balance, but a brick hit him in the only place he couldn't relax (his head all bone) and he was in the hospital two weeks with neubonia, which later developed into fallen arches.

Dippy Flinn and Subconscious Connors slouched to a spot along the tracks, best suited to the catching of the train and where the grade slowed skid train to a minimum of speed. Where the least amount of energy should be expended by these two components of commodious comfort. Once aboard and in a luxurious box car of ancient vintage they preceeded to inspect with a view to creature comforts their prison of the next few hours. Dippy of course, had first choice and chose the South by south east corner for the

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southern exposure and the pile of straw attached thereto. Subconscious had the choice of three lovely corners it should have been easy but with his usual care [sub?] took his time and stood pondering as to the direction his ruminations may have gone something like this: "Let's see now, let's see, Dip says he's in the south by south east corner, if the train we goin' south the engine would be where the "caboose" is now but it ain't it's on the other end so we must be going north if we're goin' north how can Dip be in the south [?] so corner they ain't no south in the north or is they I never heard so anyways. Dippy says so and Dippy's always right, but I cain't see, I think I'll sit down here and see if I ken figger It out. If this end of the car is south then the other end must be north but they ought to be shade on one side or t'other and they ain't so what". "Hey! Dip which way we goin. "ZZZ." H e's asleep maybe, better not wake "im." "Oh Dippy!" "Whatcha want?" "Which way we goin?" "East, y'durn feel!" Puzzled, Subconscious slowly took off his coat and balled it up for a pillow, squirmed into as comfortable a position as the hard floor allowed and was himself soon fast asleep. The freight rattled along at a pretty good dip eating up the miles and it was not long before subconscious was rudely awakened, literally with a bang, for with his usual lack of foresight he had fallen asleep with his head too close to the end of the car and the bump caused by the engineer's sudden release of the throttle jerked his head against the end.

His howl awoke his majesty the journeyman, who with many grunts and groans, got up to see where they were. "Looks like a fair sized burg, seems to me I've been here before, but they all look alike from the railroad track, dirty and dingy. Looks like these small towns would have a little civic pride and clean up what the cities can't, [soon?], as the railroads the only thing that keeps them on the map." With this remakr the train having come to a stop, the two climbed from their journeying juggernaut and ambled towards the depot and perhaps the main street.

One of Sub's many accomplishments was his habit of being hungry, he being the salesman of the partnership man always apt to solicit bakers and grocers first with his offers of good signs cheap. More often then not the remuneration was taken out in trade

## Library of Congress

and the numerous packages carried to the 'jungles' there to be concocted into a "Mulligan." Dippy and Subconscious were always welcome in the 4 jungles by the ever present, 'buzzards' who were always ready to help gather fuel and cooking utensils, in order to share in the feast. The Mulligan, made by the pair was a bonafide hobo stew - everything in it but the railroad track. Potatoes, onions, turnips, cabbage, sweet potatoes, corn, peas etc. were put in indiscriminately with the meat.

There had been times when the stew was not so perfect like the time in Hutchinson Kans., which town had been "bummed out" and the hobos in the jungles were hungry and in a [quendary?] when Dippy had hit upon the idea of assigning each man to a certain kind of shop, one to the butcher, one to the baker, etc. Each was to bum a specific item, but to take what he could get. When after a time, they gathered again in the jungle and looked over the spoils it was found that butchers had donated one link of liver sausage, the grocers a quantity of lettuce, potatoes, parsnips and some slightly damaged tomatoes, the bakers, stale bread and buns. A mulligan was made, the skin of the sausage burst and was never again recognized as such, the other ingredients were cooked into a mash. Hunger is not discriminating, so all thought the stew was good which was all that was necessary. They filled up and were satisfied, until the sheriff came down from the village and ordered them to get out on the next train. The [concocted onslaught?] on the stores of the good citizens had caused a protest against knights of the road and their absence was urgently requested.

As the two neared the depot. The place seemed more familiar to friend Dippy and soon he caught sight of a tall grain elevator and recognized a sign. He had complete several years before high up on the side of it. He remembered the layout now. Remembered the picture of a clown head, the biggest picture he had ever painted the pupils of the eyes being 6 1/2 ft. in diameter. He had cause to remember that particular sign, as he had lost a good helper while working on it. The job was almost completed, they had swung ever for the last stretch and had pulled the stage about half way up, when suddenly the rope slipped through the helper's hands (In some way part of the pull rope had come in contact with

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grease—some 5 some had adhered to it and caused it to slip.) he had caught it before it came down very far but the damage man done the “[color?” all slid to that end over him and the wall, and the pots came down on his head. To give him credit he held on to the rope through the rain of paint and pots but he refused to go up on the stage and Dippy had to finish the stretch by himself. The helper had lost his nerve and was of a consequence useless to a journeyman. Dippy had to break in another helper - was no small job.

Every workman has his idiosyncrasies and it is sometime before a helper becomes accustomed to them. For instance, one journeyman may be a (P.15) about his brushes and have the helper go through a series of useless lessons on the handling and care of brushes, another may expect his [color?] to be just right, another may expect every crack in the wall fitted with paint. There are many things a helper is supposed to know or to conjure out of thin air at a moments notice. As they passed the depot they lingered long enough to get information as to the freight schedules in case they found no work, and then sauntered down the main (P.16) The town seemed dead no one on the street. Dippy paused to get his bearings he remembered the sign shop but couldn't remember just where it was located he finally decided to send his partner down one street and he continued down main watching the side streets as he went along. Subconscious found the shop and came back for Dippy who followed him a short distance off main street. There it was with the word signs 3 [foot?] high painted on a board over the front which by the way, had not been painted since Moses had his shoes half-soled. The average small shop advocates the painting of signs but seldom paint their own. He peered into the dim interior.

What little light filtered through the dusty window was not adequate to good sight. He stepped inside and gradually his eyes became accustomed to the dim light and things began to take shape. He made out the paint bench with its litter of 6 empty cans, paint paddles and what not, a block and falls (17) carelessly on the floor, a half empty keg of white [lead?] and other apparatus common to the trade. He ventured farther into the paint laden atmosphere and let out a tentative “Hello.” He noticed now farther back long the wall something that looked human. It was folded into a chair tipped back against what

## Library of Congress

appeared to be a desk in the last stages of decay. On closer examination it proved to be the prop, an old timer whom Dippy had known long ago in another and better environment. He had worked with him at one of the best shops in the middle west. He had had a bad fall and one leg had remained stiff and as his stage career was ended he had hid himself to a small town and built up a little business of his own. As the years went by he had become more and more careless. His ambition was limited now to "getting by" until he was called to the big shop where all signpainters are sketch artists and the angels are their helpers. Dippy stepped back and yelled, "Hello Happy!" Down came the chair with a bang spilling its contents in a heap on the floor (19) language unfit for the ears of polite society. The heap jerked itself into an upright position the eyes assuming their natural focus and after a time recognized the disturbing element and greeted him with enthusiasm. "Dippy Flinn just the boy I wanted to see. I been thinkin' about you the last few days. I got a job for you. Remember the big elevator down by the tracks? You did it once before. Remember?" "Yes, I remember. That's the last time I saw Patsy. 19. What ever happened to him?" "Patsy? Oh yes, I remember him now that was the helper you had then. He staid around here awhile, then got himself a job with a farmer out of town a ways. Stops in every once in a while to say hello. He'll be in one of these days."

"I like to see old Patsy he was a pretty good man while he lasted.

"Who's the man you got now?"

"Subconscious Connors"

7

Dippy looked around for "Sub" and saw him fast asleep in the chair that had just erupted with Happy. It was back in the original position ( 20 ) against the desk but with an added feature. Sub had found a box placed it in front of the chair and placed his heels thereon. The sight of "Sub" in this comfortable position reminded Dippy that he had been on his feet all fo of two hours and he also must need rest. He spied a dilapidated overstuffed armchair

## Library of Congress

edged ever to it and sank down with a sigh of content. "Happy" found himself a box and placed himself in front of Dippy and continued to keep him awake with reminiscences of the good old days.

Dippy in the meantime bethought himself of the desire to eat and mentioned that desire to Happy. At the mention of food Subconscious' nose began to twitch but he kept his eyes tightly closed in the hope that he would not be required to get out of his comfortable position and repair to the store for it. But Happy had other ideas, his eyes searched the rear of the shop for his "shop punk" and shouted "Doeskin" and for the first time since he came in Dippy noticed the shapeless bundle ensconced on a box in the shadows of the shop. The shape entangled himself from the darkness and came forward his eyes wide in admiration of the boomer of whom he had heard so much. In his eyes Dippy was a hero, a God. The one whom Happy always used to express perfection in signpainters. Dippy could do this, Dippy could do that, Dippy would do it this way and so forth had been drummed in his ears until his imagination was imbued with the magic of Dippy, the super sign painter. Happy introduced him an "Dumbfounded Doeskin and then instructed him what to get and where to get it and that on the way he could deliver that show-card to Devine the drygood merchant and not to forget to ask the grocer for a little salt. The talk lapsed into the good old days. Of the time Patsy was elected door man at the union hall and made his boss stand outside because he couldn't give the password and Patsy wouldn't apprise the chair of his presence and how the boss had ranted and raved about it so much that Patsy had to quit and get another job, he 8 wasn't forced to but he did and the boss tried to get him back 'cause he was a good man. How Charlie Obst and "Dash" Fogarty when painting a big Maxwell sign on a building high up on the bluff facing the drive the wind came up blow the planks off one of the stages they were using and how they scrambled to get off and how "Dash" brought a quart of his grandma's balsam and whiskey one morning and they weren't any good the rest of the day. How Maxie G 23 had flirted with a girl in a window of the house they were working on and married her two weeks later, that he had three kids now and that one was apprentice in the Outdoor shop, and so-throughout the afternoon.



## Library of Congress

Dumbfounded Doeskin had been listening with eyes open and ears wide for he had made record time in his trip to get groceries not willing to miss a word of conversation. Talk finally (24) around to the job on the elevator[,?] Happy had been unable to get any one to do it on account of the height. "The signpainters they put out nowadays are afraid to go high", says he "You tell me what you need Dippy and I'll get it for you."

What about falls. I'll need 200 footers on that wall if I remember right! and here with hidden wink at Happy he said "What about sky hooks you stillget that pair I brought you the last time I came through here?"

Happy maintained a straight face and solemnly pondered his answer.

"Now let me see who did I land them to? "Oh yes! I lent them to the house-painter at the other end of town. Doeskin, "Come here!" You go down there and find out if he's through with them and while your at it get that left handed yardstick he promised me."

Doeskin got to his feet and started his chunky body rolling toward the door he wondered at the roar of laughter that went up as he started down the street towards his objective.

He had never heard of the strange implements he was sent for so he could not be expected to know that he was off in search of the golden fleece, as it were, and that many a step would he take before it came to him via surreptitious smiles and 9 and ill-hidden grins that the sky hooks and left handed yardsticks were a myth.

Doeskin was a good natured boy and he laughed with the rest over his misadventures and thereby set himself in solid with his out of town friends. If he had shown ire in any respect he would have been further bedeviled, as the apprentice is fair prey. His good nature spiked their grins and henceforth he was able to pick up many valuable hints spoken for his edification by the lazy Dippy who was ever ready to help a youngster on his way and they were many who could say that Dippy taught them what they knew.

## Library of Congress

Dippy was the best kind of a teacher being too lazy to show them, he told them what to do and then let them practice it themselves on some of his jobs. If they did it right he let it go, if not he did it over himself thereby showing them by experience where their mistakes were. Dippy was a natural philosopher; he made his Utopia as he went along. His motto was 'Do unto others as you wish to be done but keep your hand on your pocket book pocket!

Dippy had met his helper in the “jungles” of an eastern city. Subconscious was uneducated but was smart enough to keep his mouth shut in the presence of strangers. It was not until after he had reamed around for several months with Dippy that he thawed enough to confide some of his adventures. He was born in the 'Ghetto' of a great metropolitan city. He had gone to school as little as possible and then only when a truant officer caught him and threatened reform school. His mother had died when he was very young and left him as the sole charge of a worthless father who left him to his own devices. He had made his escape when the other members of his gang had been caught stealing the brass plumbing from a railroad passenger car. The officers had hidden in the cars and disappear. He had swung on a passing freight and thus started on his travels. He became acquainted with 2 men on the train who turned out to be burglars; they persuaded him to join them and for a while he was their lookout and sometimes was boosted over transome and through small windows. After several months of this, receiving no money, he 10 he decided to leave these men and go on his own. He had waited until they were asleep one night, and stole away. It was shortly after this he had attached himself to Dippy.

Sub was quick to learn and attentive to any words of instruction. He won the good graces of the journeymen by his ability to sell signs thus keeping them supplied with funds. He had learned the use of the falls, how to tis off and was not afraid to go high. He was as much at home an the stage up high as he was near the ground.

Dippy and Sub slept in the shop that night and were awakened next morn, when Happy opened up. After 'coffee and' - they gathered together the tools and materials for the big

## Library of Congress

job. Dippy inspected the falls for "dry rot," repaired a block of which the pin was loose. Sub took the stage ladder out book of the shop and burnt off the accumulated paint with gasoline in order to lighten it. He went to a lumber yard and brought back new planks, and burnt out some paint pots and cleaned out "fillers" "cutters" and "fitches" that had not been used lately and were unusual "lousey" from standing in gas so long. Everything was then carted to the elevator and while Subconscious found his way to the roof through the inside of the building, Dippy arranged the falls. Arriving at the roof, Sub threw down one end of a line on which the hook and one end of the fall was attached. He then pulled it up, hooked it over the edge of the building and tied it back so that it could not slip off. He went through the same procedure with the other and came down and helped Dippy assemble the stage and mix color.

The stage consisted of two slings, two bumpers, a twenty-two ft. wire ladder and 3/8 in. planks on which to stand. The slings, also called stirrups, are made of rope (in some states other than Missouri it is required by law that they be made of iron) - and was a loop in the middle which fits over the hook at the lower end of the fall. The two free ends also have loops and are fitted on each end of the bumper. The bumper is a two by four with a wheel on one end which runs against the wall holding the stage out. The stage rests on the bumper between the stirrups and is pulled upwards by means of a free rope or pull rope. When the stage is pulled up to the required height, the operator takes a half-hitch through the sling and over the hook of the lower block one rope crossing over, the other binding it tight into the V-shaped crotch formed under the middle loop of the sling.

Dippy mixed colors by guess. Looking at the wall, he measured in his mind how much it would take and sized accordingly; but working on the theory that it is better to mix too much than not enough. With his sketch before him on the ground he matched colors which Sub mixed black and white lead. There was a picture of a negro mammy to be painted this time and Sub scouted about for a box and empty tin cans. The cans to be used for the various shades and colors. The box to hold them on the stage so that they would not be inadvertently kicked off while working. A large price of tin for a pallets, they were ready to

## Library of Congress

start. The wall not coated an is the case now-a-days; but as it was a black background it mattered little.

Some journeymen start at the bottom of the sign and layout and "spot on" going up. This procedure, always seemed to Dippy to be doing twice what could be done over. He started at the top and came down completing each stretch on the way. They pulled up to the top and Sub went up, climbed over unto the stage and tied off; then Dippy followed.

Unless it is impossible to do so the job is always started from left to right where there is more than one swing. As the picture was on that end, Dippy had previously scaled off his sketch and had to do the same on the wall. Each was marked off in squares and what was in each square on the sketch was put in each square on the wall. In this manner the picture was drawn and painted from the sketch. But experience enters into the scheme of things for the workman in painting only a segment of the whole as he lowers himself and must constantly keep in mind how it is going to look at a distance. The picture on the sketch may be weak in color and the journeyman must strengthen the highlights and shadows accordingly. He must watch his drawing, as it is very easy to lose perspective on a big picture. In the big towns where there is more than one sign to be painted a "perforated pounce" is used in order that the drawing be the same on each sign. Also in the larger cities when a number of signs have the same picture and that picture is to be executed in "poster style" the various colors are sometimes mixed in quantity before-hand and each journey man is required to [use?] these ready mixed colors. By thus confining the workman he is precluded the use of his own ideas as no two signpainters work alike even to the lettering.

As the picture began to take on shape spectators gathered to watch and guess what it was going to be. Their comments were audible to the two on the stage who grinned at each other over some of the wisecracks. Some were of the opinion that sign painting was easy witness the fact that they even had a sketch to go by. "Who couldn't paint a sign?"

## Library of Congress

said they. "Why, there's nothing to it." Others thought it hard. In the first place they said," It takes courage to work so high in the air."

The average signpainter thinks nothing of working high. Danger never enters his mind. Balancing himself on the comparatively narrow stage becomes second nature. The greatest danger lies, not as would be supposed on falling outward, but inward. The possibility of one's pressing too hard or suddenly against the wall thereby throwing the stage out from it and causing one to fall between the stage and wall is all too easy. A building that has a cornice extending out, say one foot from the wall is dangerous because the wheel of the bumper touches very lightly and the least push will send the stage swinging outward leaving a gap through, which there would be no returning. 13 There are other dangers. Arriving at the job too late one evening to swing up, Dippy had left the falls on the roof of the 14 story hotel. The next day being Saturday there was no work. The falls lay on the roof until Monday. Monday morning Dippy started work as usual; nothing appeared wrong with the falls when let down over the edge of the roof. The owner of the building next door refused to let him swing from his roof so Dippy had to make what is called a roof swing. When making a roof swing, the fall is shortened block to block, the big hook is put on and wired or tied, the stirrups and bumpers are assembled in place and hooked on to the lower block and with a man on each end the entire outfit is lifted carefully over the wall and let down until the big hooks come in contact with the fire wall after which one man climbs down and takes the planks which are handed to him from the roof. All this is difficult, necessitating a strong back and a weak mind. After the stage was swung the sign was started. When half way down Dippy was surprised to see one of the stands of the rope part and unwind itself to the block. Just as he called it to the attention of the helper another parted and he felt a slight give to the stage; even then he did not get excited or scared. As did his helper. There was a window a few feet below and he had the courage to let the stage down to the window on that one remaining stand of the rope. He did it very carefully knowing that a sudden jerk would part the rope and precipitate him to the concrete sidewalk eight stories below. The window being now within reach the helper

## Library of Congress

opened it and climbed inside. He found a phone and called the shop telling then what had happened and what was needed. Meanwhile Dippy had remained on the stage. He had gone to the other end, tied the guy line around his middle and waited. As he waited he began thinking of what had happened and what could still happen. He could visualize himself down there on that sidewalk. He could see the ladder sticking out of the top of some automobiles' roof. All sorts of dire calamities flashed through his brain.

14

The arrival of the shop truck with an extra fall found him scared sick. He forced himself to fasten the new fall and bumper on the stage pulled it up so that the broken fall could be disengaged. The sign was soon finished and earth felt unusually solid to his feat. He examined the broken fall and found that an acid had eaten through the parted strands. Where the acid had come from was problematical. Dippy opined that it had in some way come from the smoke stack a few feet from where the ropes were lying.

Dippy was progressing with the picture and a huge grin was beginning to appear on the mammy's face. Sub was sitting on one end of the stage asleep, for while Dippy was painting the picture there was nothing for him to do except let the stage down and paint the border and inset. The shrill blast of a factory whistle woke him up, at the same time letting him know that it was noon. Each put an extra half hitch over the small hook and slid down the rope to the ground. Happy was there waiting for them and led them to a lunch room. The best in town, so he said.

After eating, the saloon next door was their mecoa for the rest of the afternoon; they sat and talked and talked signs. Eventually Sub thought of the brushes lying on the stage and went to the job to retrieve them. He climbed to the roof, slid down the falls, collected the brushes, let them down to the ground, slid down after them. He hunted up some old newspapers and wrapped them, put some gas on them and wandered back to his companions. Happy and his friend had mellowed considerably and had reached the stage of barroom harmony. "Sweet Adeline" floated out through the bat wing doors in varying

## Library of Congress

degree of discord. Workers hurrying home with their dinner buckets on their arms stopped in to jeer and remained to join them. Their voices added to the general din as the evening grew older. The bartender had to get help and the good brew flowed freely. The crowd thinned out as the hour grew late and the two friends left the bartender sorrowing over their departure.

15

Sub had disappeared long before.. Dippy took Happy to his home then Happy said he'd go with Dippy to keep him company. Arriving at the shop Dippy decided that Happy must have companionship on his way home and so on. Morning found Dippy sitting on Happy's front steps where he had fallen asleep waiting for Happy when he had lost track of in their wanderings. He later found Happy asleep at the shop him having had the same idea in his head that he must wait for Dippy to see that he got home all right.

### EXPLANATIONS OF TERMS

The pounce pattern is a piece of paper four feet wide and as long as is necessary, on which the subject is drawn some times by hand some times projected onto the paper by means of a projector, a lantern with a series of mirrors and lenses. It is drawn from the reflection on the paper and then pricked with a tailors pricking wheel.

The pounce bag is filled with charcoal for walls and bulletins with whiting for glass. It is usually made with cheese cloth and rubbed over the perforations leaving the impression on the wall on glass as the case may be.

"Jungles" in a hobo camping ground usually outside the towns limits so that the town marshall has no jurisdiction over them as has a sheriff. Sometimes there is a jungle on each side of town. In the large cities as a rule there is no jungles as the hobos congregate in some certain part of town as suits their purpose which of course is begging for money,

## Library of Congress

cheap saloons and eating houses. This district, an you know in market street in our own fair city.

[?] "Workman" of course is a "Journeyman or journeyman signpainter and as such is defined in our International Union. Commercial man, one who works only on glass and smaller glasses of signs. Sketch man makes the sketch from which the signpainter works. A lay-out man is used in the studios of big shops and does nothing but laying out lettering. The completed signs are apt in this way to have the same characteristics and so look alike.

16

"The all around man" can do anything glass, walls, bulletins etc. A combination man is one who paints the picture and lettering. A picture paint or is sometimes unable to do lettering.

"Native son" is self explanatory.

A "Stretch" is the distance that can be reached in one swing.

A "Swing" describes the stage as it hangs on the wall.

The "tie off" is the half hitch make under the crotch of the sling and over the hook on the lower block; this is very important and is the first thing learned in stage work.

"Pull rope" is the free end by which the stage is raised and lowered.

A "Buzzard" in hobo language, is one who is too lazy or too timid to beg on the street at back doors or other establishments where food is a commodity or necessity and are content to hover around the jungles and pick up the left overs or ingratiate themselves into the good grace of the more callous beggars who have accumulated the wherewithall of a mulligan by carrying wood, make a fire etc.



## Library of Congress

“Bummedout”, describes the state of a town where begging has become promiscuous and the townspeople are hardened by the too frequent please [for?] alms. Most division points and sub-divisions of railroads are in this condition or were.

“Color”, paint.

“Shop Punk”, apprentice.

“Fillers”, so called because they are used to fill in the big spaces of the sign are never larger than four inches seldom that much usually 3 1/2.

“Cutters”, so called because they are used for cutting in the bigger letter also used to fill in where the filler is too large.

A “Fitch”, also called by the housepainter Rigger, is used for suffacing dark letters an a light background also cutting in smaller letters 2.

A brush is called “Lousey” when some of the paint has dried in the 17 bristles, as happens in hot weather and when the brush has not been in use for a considerable length of time.

A “Guy line” is used to pull the falls to the roof and also is hung down the middle of the stage in order to balance oneself when working on extra high walls.

“Spot on” is the process of painting the light colored letters that are to be out in with a darker color or black.

In “Poster style” pictures the colors are not blended. The juxtaposition of the colors and shades light and dark in proper order form the picture.

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DeSoto is a Spanish-Irish "boomer" sign painter who says he is a direct lineal descendant of his explorer namesake. His story is unedited, even to punctuation. This story is an experiment with the method used by Jack Commons in editing his Seven Shifts (E. P. Dutton & Co., 1936). Commons found it more satisfactory to ask his informants to write their stories in their own words. After considerable editing he evolved what he believes to [me] be typical stories of seven typical workers in seven industries.